



Report to the Board of Trustees

January 6, 2021

From the Director

The renovation project is wrapping up. The auditorium ceiling trim has been painted with Sherwin Williams 7562—Roman Column (white). The coffers have been painted with SW 0028, Caen Stone (off-white), and the overall effect is much brighter. We have started to receive calls about booking the library for private events, and now that the room is completed, we may be able to start renting the space again this summer depending on COVID restrictions.



*Thank you to the
Branford Garden Club!*

With COVID infection rates increasing in Branford and across the state, and with the necessity of some staff to quarantine, the library building was closed to the public from December 7 — 18. We continued contactless pickup of materials, and streamlined the process to eliminate the need for appointments, which has been very well received. The library opened for browsing by appointment on December 21. The computer lab will open again in January.

The Garden Club created and installed wreaths at the library entrances, and filled the planters with small trees and greens. We appreciate their effort every year to provide seasonal cheer for the holidays.



The auditorium ceiling has been painted!!

The State Library reviewed our grant application and indicated it would not be funded. They recommended applying with a more discrete project. The Strategic Planning Committee met and elected Michelle Blank as its chair. Michelle is working with Innovation Builders to revise their contract. Michelle will also work with library staff to begin conducting internal stakeholder interviews.

The Finance Committee met and reviewed the status of the PPP loan forgiveness application, capital improvements, and began to prepare for the FY 2022 budget review process.

The Library was fortunate to receive a grant award from the Branford Community Foundation for \$3950 to create a series of programs focusing on issues connected with racism. Entitled *Awakening to Change*, the first program in the series will feature a moderated talk with Debby Irving, the author of *Waking up White*.

The fall appeal earned \$46,165—exceeding our annual goal of \$42,500 as of January 4. As always, we are grateful for the generosity of our community in support of our mission.

-Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—November



"We had such a fantastic time at Padawan Training today! It was awesome to see Master Luke Skywalker training younglings"

All ages were invited to view a LIVE stream of **Frozen II** along with a special guest appearance from Elsa this month. Miss Mary found a reasonably priced Elsa by searching other libraries' program offerings. She actually found a CA library that put together a virtual Princess Read and was able to register and view the performers to get a sneak peek. She then reached out to the children's librarian who connected us with the impersonators that ran the event. We were able to book a performance with an Elsa "look alike" who talked about her adventures, provided magic tricks and started a singalong. Participants also had time to ask questions and she promised to send personal messages to other Disney characters before saying goodbye. The event was sensational and everyone stayed to watch the entire movie.

We also hosted an animal program on Election Day that focused on bats. Our friends at the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center put together a beautiful PowerPoint about various bats native to the US. We had an excellent turnout for the event and families waited till the program was complete to fact check and ask questions. The organization also put together a simple "fact or fiction" game where participants had to guess if the bat tidbits they shared were true or false.

Miss Sarah hosted an animal program for teens that gave them a behind the scenes look at the Connecticut Wild-

life Center. Here, wild animals rehab or become permanent residents from traumatic experiences. Teens were able to see how the center operates and learned a lot about how they handle rehab calls. Most important, participants learned what to do if they find an animal in distress.

One of our favorite programs this month was in collaboration with our local Saber Guild. The Guild is composed of Star Wars enthusiasts who provide LIVE performances for different nonprofits and charities. Apparently they have been providing a Padawan Training Program for quite some time so I contacted them to see if they could do it virtually. They provided 3 actors the day of the event in full costume along with custom backgrounds to make it look like we were training on a Star Wars ship. Participants came fully dressed and ready to practice some lightsaber moves! The best part was in the middle of the session when the Guild had a Sith (bad guy) "hack" in during their training and all the participants had to use the force to get him to leave. A lot of parents emailed us after the fact, thanking us for hosting such a fun event.

Miss Sarah also had a lot of success with her DIY terrarium project. She used a combination of supplies to make dinosaur terrariums! Miss Sarah set the program up as a contactless pick up event with everyone meeting on the same day/time to create their habitats together. She talked TLC that terrariums

need in order to survive. Participants then followed her instructions and shared their creations at the end of the DIY session.

Miss Sarah, Katy and I also collaborated with Branford High School by hosting a series of ZOOM informational sessions for incoming freshmen. During each session we focused on the databases and various apps they could use to download books, movies and music. We also explained printing from home and placing holds through our catalog. So far we have talked to six classes with two more to go.

Finally, we received a grant from the Claire C. Bennett Watershed Fund. The supported program will take place in the spring and is entitled Reading Colors Your World (Waterways). It was created in collaboration with the Town of Branford's Office of Sustainability and Compliance. The program will be broken into two sessions and will use a combination of stories, discussion starters, visuals and hands-on activities to introduce children in grades K-4 to Branford's natural resources, including the watershed and various waterways. Both sessions will reinforce their importance and teach participants the actionable steps they need to take to protect this precious resource through conservation, recycling and reducing litter. This is our first time applying for the grant and we cannot wait to add the two part event to our 2021 calendar.

-Carly Lemire

Awakening to Change

In July 2020, Roberta Gill-Brooks joined former State Representative Lonnie Reed for a conversation about growing up Black in Branford. The overwhelmingly positive response inspired a lecture series designed with the intent to unify our community to develop a shared understanding of the history, policy, and experiences shaping contemporary discussions of race.

The series kicks off with a conversation on **Monday, January 25 at 7 pm** with Debby Irving, speaker, diversity trainer, and author of *Waking Up White*. Debby Irving is an emerging voice in the national racial justice community who educates and consults

with those seeking to create racial equity at both the personal and institutional level. She will speak about her book, in which she addresses how her own long-held beliefs about colorblindness, being a good person, and wanting to help people of color actually perpetuated her ill-conceived ideas about race. She will share her struggle to understand racism and racial tensions, and will offer a fresh perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners, and tolerance.

Though the focus is primarily on awakening white community members, all are welcome and the voices and perspectives of people of color


are encouraged and honored."

To learn more about Debby Irving and her extensive works, visit debbyirving.com.

We have purchased copies of *Waking Up White* for the community to read in advance of the discussion. A limited number of copies are available at the Blackstone Library to borrow. We hope you will join us for these important community conversations and begin (or continue) your own work of dismantling racism.

Register to attend this discussion at blackstonelibrary.org.


"When it comes to race, I'm colorblind. But I'm a good person. Isn't that enough?"



A Conversation with Author Debby Irving

Monday, January 25
7-8 pm program, 8-8:30 pm Q&A

REGISTER TODAY! Visit blackstonelibrary.org to sign up and receive the meeting link via Zoom.



Highlights from the Reference Department-November

The library had another great month of virtual programs that included a presentation on Indian Neck by Town Historian Jane Bouley, a class on Cutting the Cord, a virtual Paint Party, an author event, poetry and Latin classes, book discussions, high school diploma information sessions, our Friday Night Game Night and a Branford Forum on Branford's Clean Energy Campaign.

Jenna, Christina and the Youth Services Department

have completed their Winter Events planning and Katy created a full calendar of events for our website. It's an impressive collection of programs for all ages and our patrons appreciate the wide variety that we offer.

We received our new microfilm reader and it has been put to immediate use by a patron searching for real estate sales during a period of about twenty years. The reader is easy to use, the quality of the images is great

and the Reference department plans to use it to make clearer copies of a number of the items we have in our vertical file, prior to digitizing them.

-Debby Trofatter



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...more than books

Join our email list for more
information about programs
www.blackstonelibrary.org

January 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

Virtual Tech Help

January 5 @ 2 - 4 pm

Is a problem on your iPhone driving you crazy? Are you stuck trying to get emails on your iPad, or download an app, but it's not working?

Sign up for one-on-one tech help with Christina. Email ckondziela@blackstonelibrary.org to schedule an appointment.

Know Your Roots: Genealogy with the US Census

January 9 @ 1 - 2 pm

This one-hour virtual program will introduce you to the workings of the US census. A foundational source for the research of US based ancestors, the census can allow a researcher to follow a family over time. It can also provide hints for other useful sources. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Navigating the Library Catalog

January 14 @ 2 - 3:15 pm

Do you have questions about how to navigate our online

catalog and how to place holds? Would you like to learn the best way to browse the catalog from your home? Come to this class to learn the ins and outs of the library catalog.

Virtual Game Night

January 15 @ 6 - 9 pm

Join us for a night of silly online games with some fun, laid-back people, without having to leave the house! Get all the info you need and RSVP on our Meetup page.

No Rules: A Virtual Local Author Event

January 16 @ 1 - 2 pm

Connecticut author Sharon Dukett will discuss her memoir *No Rules*. It's an illuminating coming-of-age story of how Sharon left home at sixteen to escape the limited life her parents have planned for her—and finds herself thrown into the 1970s counterculture, an adult world for which she is unprepared.

Making a Successful Career Pivot in Post-Pandemic Times

January 23 @ 1 - 2 pm

You may be thinking: am I in the right job or career? Should I pivot internally or externally to find something better? Is there more opportunity waiting for me? Is my career safe? Learn 8 strategies to build your resilience to adjust to a career change and to evolving market demands. By the end of the presentation, you will learn 8 ways to grow as a professional and be ready for change and opportunity. Presented by Mark Danaher.

Herbs for Stress and Anxiety

January 28 @ 6 - 7 pm

We could all use a little stress relief these days. Luckily, the plants are here to help! Join Nora Toomey, Clinical Herbalist of True Bloom, to dive deep into a handful of plants that nourish and support the nervous system. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

All programs are virtual—please visit our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org for registration information.

November 2020 Statistics

Total Circulation: 5,171
November 2019: 9,197

borrowIT: 948
November 2019: 2,391

Renewals: 3,992

Computer Sessions: 251
WIFI Logins: 936

Facebook: 1911 Likes
Instagram: 989 Followers
MailChimp: 7,608

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1266

Overdrive audiobooks: 518

RB Digital: 417

HOOPLA: 795

Kanopy: 204

Pronunciator: 550

Ancestry Library: 1,423
searches

Total Downloadable: 5,173

Children's Programs

9 programs/131 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

10 programs/185 attendance

Adult programs

15 programs/397 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room N/A
Conference Room N/A

Days Open: 22

Average Daily Visitors: 123